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## Souls for the Lamb: The Puritan and Moravian Mission Towns Compared

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SOULS FOR THE LAMB  
Puritan and Moravian Mission Towns Compared

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of History  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by  
Daniel Ingram  
1998


APPROVAL SHEET

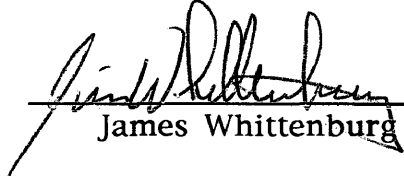
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the experiences of Indians in the "praying towns" of seventeenth-century New England and in the Moravian mission towns of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. Despite the ravages of disease, alcohol, and loss of native lands, all brought about through the European invasion of America, Indians developed survival strategies based upon their remaining native traditions and the options available to them in the new cultural milieu. Some Indians answered the call of Christian missionaries and opted for lives in European-style towns as a method of cultural renewal. This essay maintains that those Indians internalized their Christian teachings sufficiently to prepare them for the intense hardships that would follow.

New England praying towns were built according to English plans but retained much of the natives' lifeways. The Puritan doctrine was unlike anything the Massachusetts Indians had known, but the demands brought on by the invasion encouraged the praying Indians to take up the challenge. Though they formed their own churches and sought to live in peace with their white neighbors, ethnic intolerance challenged their faith and fortitude. Their greatest test came during King Philip's War, when the praying Indians showed that their Christian teachings had given them the humility and courage they needed to face the dangers.

Moravian praying towns provided a different experience for Indians in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. Open lands to the west provided alternatives to devastated Indians in the Delaware Valley, but the practices of the German Pietist Moravians appealed to some local Indians, who chose to stay and trust their missionary protectors. Though their doctrines were very different from those of the Puritan Calvinists, the Moravians provided their native neophytes with the inspiration needed to survive the murderous intolerance of their white neighbors, including the infamous Paxton Boys.

While the experiences of both groups of praying Indians had much in common, the major differences in conversion and rituals would lead one to expect different outcomes. But each in their own way, the Puritan and Moravian praying Indians were able to survive the attacks of intolerant settlers and their subsequent states of dependence.

SOULS FOR THE LAMB.  
PURITAN AND MORAVIAN MISSION TOWNS COMPARED

## INTRODUCTION

I had (among others) sometimes opportunity to accompany Mr. Elliott to visit and comfort the poor Christian Indians confined to Deer Island . . . I observed in all my visits to them, that they carried themselves patiently, humbly, and piously, without murmuring or complaining against the English for their sufferings (which were not few,) for they lived chiefly upon clams and shell-fish, that they digged out of the sand, at low water; the Island was bleak and cold, their wigwams poor and mean, their clothes few and thin; some little corn they had of their own, which the Council ordered to be fetched from their plantations, and they conveyed to them little and little; also a boat and a man was appointed to look after them. I may say in the words of truth (according to my apprehension), there appeared among them much practical Christianity in this time of their trials.<sup>1</sup>

-- Deer Island, Massachusetts: December 1675.

November 11th, they arrived at the barracks in Philadelphia, in which, by order of the Government, they were to be lodged: but the soldiers quartered there, forcibly refused them admittance, in spite of the positive command of the governor. Thus the poor Indians were detained in the street, from ten o'clock in the forenoon to three in the afternoon. A dreadful mob gathered around them, deriding, reviling, and charging them with all the outrages committed by the savages, threatening to kill them on the spot; which they certainly would have done, had the Indians returned evil for evil. But they were all silent, and afterwards said that they had comforted themselves, by considering what insult and mockery our Savior had suffered on their account. The missionaries, who, for their zealous interference and endeavors in behalf of their congregations, were treated with contempt, declared that they ascribed it to the miraculous providence of God alone, that they were not sacrificed to the fury of this misinformed and exasperated mob. <sup>2</sup>

-- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: November 1763.

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Gookin, *An Historical Account of the Doing and Sufferings of the Christian Indians in New England, in the Years 1675, 1676, 1677* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 485-86.

<sup>2</sup>George Henry Loskiel, *History of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Indians in North America*, trans. Christian LaTrobe, 3 vol. (microform, Louisville, KY: Lost Cause Press, 1975; orig. pub. 1794), II: 216.



Before leaving England in 1629, John Winthrop assured his group of Puritan immigrants that they and those who followed would create a society in the American wilderness, devoted to God's pleasure and subservient to His will, and that all Christian eyes would scrutinize that society as an example of religious purity. Winthrop insisted upon universal cooperation and recognition of existing social hierarchies, for their "cittie upon a hill" must run smoothly or be doomed to a failure that would hinder Christianity everywhere.<sup>3</sup> But by the 1660s, divisions within the New Englanders' own ranks and tensions with their Indian neighbors led to a period of nostalgia for a simpler past and desperation over an unknown future. Puritans defined their sorrows and trials as divine afflictions from God, who for His own incomprehensible purposes, occasionally challenged the godly with doubts and terrors. Then in 1675 an Indian war provided the ultimate test of the Puritans' faith. This horrible conflict signaled a turning point not only in colonists' conceptions of their own religion and society but also in their relations with the local Indians, whom the New Englanders saw as both divine tools of grace and troubling servants of evil. In that sense, the Puritans saw the Indians much as they saw themselves, but in English eyes the natives retained a quality of otherness that would never be overcome.

Almost a century later, in November 1763, the English, Scots-Irish, and German settlers of the Delaware Valley experienced a turning point of their own. The latest Anglo-French war had ended and the rough countryside of eastern Pennsylvania, once the domain of Indian hunters and half-wild white traders, had been successfully transformed into a tidy mosaic of picturesque farmsteads. The closest Indian neighbors of significant numbers lived in

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<sup>3</sup>John Winthrop, Sr. "A Modell of Christian Charity," in *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* (hereafter cited as *MHSC*), 3rd ser., vol. 7 (Boston: 1838), 47.

multiethnic communities on the Susquehanna. But out of the west came disturbing news that groups of defiant Indians intended to continue the war that France had abandoned. English forts had been attacked throughout the Great Lakes region and bands of unknown natives assailed farm settlements much closer to home. Just a month earlier, Indians had attacked the Irish Settlement in Allen's Township, only forty miles from Philadelphia, and killed eight settlers including a prominent farmer and a militia captain. Attacks on Indian communities had also been common, but many local settlers considered them fair game. After all, in wartime one must attack one's enemies, and in the current turmoil that would soon be named for a distant Ottawa war chief named Pontiac the enemies were Indians. The fact that some of them were Christians, like the Delawares and Mahicans who calmly marched through Philadelphia led by their Moravian minister, and lived in log houses, sang English hymns, and farmed in the same manner as their European neighbors was an irrelevant distinction for some.

These two incidents, the protective internment of Christian Indians on Deer Island during King Philip's War in 1675 and in the Philadelphia barracks during the Paxton Boys' uprising in 1763, represented something more than turning points for the Christian Indians involved. Contact with Europeans thrust a series of hard choices upon both seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay Indians and their eighteenth-century Pennsylvania counterparts. Their lives before contact resonated with the pulses of the natural environment, and over centuries they developed complex and dynamic cultural and social patterns that encouraged growth and sufficiency. But then ravaging European diseases obliterated whole bands in a few short decades and English migrants quickly settled temporarily underpopulated Indians lands. In response, most natives tried to carry on with their traditional lives, especially

those at a distance from the invading Europeans and those who could migrate to safer ground. Others resisted the invasion through warfare and cultural revitalization movements.<sup>4</sup> But some, only a few hundred overall, opted for life in praying towns planned by Puritan and Moravian missionaries. Guided into those towns by harsh circumstances, the Christian Indians chose to adjust to the introduction of new cultures rather than resist them, and their exposure to charismatic missionaries and satisfying religious practices answered their need for cultural rejuvenation. This choice would eventually lead to dependence upon Europeans, as exemplified by the epigraphs that present a picture of Christian Indians as virtual wards of their Puritan and Moravian caretakers. This essay examines the processes leading to those states of dependence and seeks to show that while life in a Christian praying town represented subordination to English invaders, the participants still internalized their Christian teachings enough to extract meaning and comfort from their horrifying experiences. Puritan and Moravian praying Indians experienced their trials not merely as turning points but as moments of truth.

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<sup>4</sup>James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 97-121.

## CHAPTER ONE

### BEFORE THE MISSIONARIES

The native inhabitants of New England and the Delaware Valley lived lives of practicality before European contact. That is, while their lifeways were not ideal, they answered the inhabitants' needs for survival in satisfying, understandable terms. This represented culture on more than one level for the Indians of the regions. On the one hand, Indians followed specific cultural practices and spiritual beliefs that had evolved over time. Concurrently, Indians enjoyed a quality of life that grew from these practices, in which each inhabitant knew how the needs of daily life could be answered. With the onset of European-borne epidemics and alcohol, settlers' land hunger, and the natives' eventual economic dependence, Indians would lose both traditional lifeways and the comfort level that came with them. Subsequent cultural revitalization movements should then be viewed as attempts to regain not only specific lifeways, but the traditional qualities of life lost in the European-Indian exchange.

On the eve of European contact, Algonkians in New England and Pennsylvania led practical lives, synchronized over centuries with the rhythms of nature. Five 'nations' of Indians occupied southern New England: the Pequots, Narragansetts, Pokanokets, Massachusetts, and Pawtuckets.<sup>5</sup> The Lenapes, or Delewares, of the Delaware Valley region probably constituted

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<sup>5</sup>Kathleen J. Bragdon, *Native People of Southern New England* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 25-26; Gookin, "Historical Collections of the Indians in New England" in *MHSC*, 1st ser., vol. 1 (Boston: 1792), 147-48.

three linguistic groups, the Munsee, the Unami, and the Unalachtigo.<sup>6</sup> Their small villages displayed "no regular plan" to European observers, but were in fact based upon centuries of tradition, using settlement patterns of varying permanence depending on kinship networks and their locations relative to rivers, estuaries, and woodlands.<sup>7</sup> Houses were built of available saplings and bark, and ranged from small huts to long oval houses which accommodated up to a dozen related families.<sup>8</sup> Indians used horticultural techniques to raise the corn, beans, and squash and supplemented these staple crops with wild fish and game.<sup>9</sup> While the complexities of everyday life are difficult to glean from the sparse documentary record, the evidence does suggest that the rhythms of nature and the environment joined with interpersonal dynamics in the creation and maintenance of Indian lifeways in both the Delaware Valley and

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<sup>6</sup>Thomas J. Sugrue, "The Peopling and Depeopling of Early Pennsylvania: Indians and Colonists, 1680-1720," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 116 (January 1992): 7-8.

<sup>7</sup>Bragdon, *Native People*, 74-78; John Smith, *Works, 1608-1631*, p. 2 (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1895), 706; John Josselyn, *John Josselyn, Colonial Traveler*, Paul J. Lindholt, ed. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988), 91; *David Zeisberger's History of the Northern American Indians*, Archer Butler Hulbert and William Nathaniel Schwartze, ed. (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1910), 87; Sugrue, "Peopling and Depeopling," 77-78. Archaeologist Marshall J. Becker has theorized that Lenape settlements should really be seen as temporary hunting camps, rather than the Indians' permanent or primary homes. See Marshall J. Becker, "Lenape Archaeology: Archaeological and Ethnohistoric Consideration in Light of Recent Excavations" *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*, 50 (1980): 22.

<sup>8</sup>Bragdon, *Native People*, 25-26; Gookin, "Historical Collections", 147-50; Francis Daniel Pastorius, "Circumstantial Geographical Description of Pennsylvania," in *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey, and Delaware, 1630-1707*, Albert Cook Myers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 384; *Zeisberger's History*, 17; Herbert C. Kraft, *The Lenape: Archaeology, History, and Ethnography* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1986), 122-27.

<sup>9</sup>Gookin, "Historical Collections," 150; William Wood, *New England's Prospect* (Boston: 1897), 70-71; Josselyn, *Colonial Traveler*, 93; Bragdon, *Native People*, 81-91; Loskiel, *History*, I: 75; *Zeisberger's History*, 14, Becker, "Lenape Archaeology," 22; Kraft, *Lenape*, 115, 117; Paul A. W. Wallace, *Indians in Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1964), 25.

Massachusetts Bay regions. But these lifeways were hardly ideal, for then as now, nature was capricious and unpredictable and often introduced hardship into the Indians' lives. They were, nonetheless, pragmatic strategies that Indians understood and used to the best of their abilities to provide as stable a life as nature would allow.

Indians in both regions used practical methods to deal with the demands of the temporal world but also reserved great respect for the world beyond living sight. European descriptions of Indian cosmology and spirituality are rife with Eurocentric corruption, exemplified by descriptions of deistic battles between good and evil spirits. Rather, belief in good and bad spirits reflected the duality of Indian life; positive and negative, happiness and sadness, and right and wrong were familiar concepts in Indian spirituality just as they were in the European mind.<sup>10</sup> More basically, Indians believed in Manitou, an all-encompassing power known to occupy both people and objects and permeating all facets of existence, which they conceptualized as two supernatural beings - one dark and dangerous, the other bright and wonderful - who lived under the ground or water and in the sky, respectively.<sup>11</sup> While everyone could interact with Manitou through dreams or visions, religious practitioners (powwaws) provided a less passive link between the physical and the spirit world.<sup>12</sup> Indians in both regions also believed in an immortal soul that could pass into a beneficent afterlife, into the earth, or the sun, or could be transmuted and born anew.<sup>13</sup> The rich

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<sup>10</sup>Gookin, "Historical Collections," 154; Kraft, *Lenape*, 162-6; *Zeisberger's History*, 130.

<sup>11</sup>Bragdon, *Native People*, 185-88.

<sup>12</sup>Edward Winslow, "Relation," in *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, Ernest Rhys, ed. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1917), 345.

<sup>13</sup>*Zeisberger's History*, 131; M. R. Harrington, *Religion and Ceremonies of the Lenape* (New York: Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation, 1921), 52-53.

legacy of Algonkian spiritual and cosmological beliefs differed from European religion in a number of ways, especially in the Indians' cosmological view that inanimate objects were as fundamental to the course of the universe as humans and that all living things possessed spirits. However, this legacy serves also as a reminder that when missionaries met Indians in the New World, they found and exploited existing spiritual similarities between the two cultures. Both cultures believed in an afterlife, and prepared the bodies of their dead for continued lives in the hereafter. Dreams, though analyzed differently by Indians and Europeans, were held by both to be powerful messages from supernatural forces or visions of the future. Spirits and divining occupied the belief systems of both cultures, and though European astrological practices differed from Indian divination, witches and "cunning folk" would have been familiar fixtures to natives and newcomers. Traditional Europeans ordered their lives by the cycles of agriculture, and Indians in eastern America who held annual Green Corn Festivals would have understood both Catholic and Protestant equivalents. Both Algonkians and Europeans believed that blood carried great spiritual power, and the sacrificial image of the bleeding Jesus would not have seemed alien to natives familiar with ritual sacrifice and torture. Finally, both cultures believed in an overwhelming, omnipresent power that permeated nature, even if they disagreed on how this power should be conceived.<sup>14</sup> When Europeans spoke of a God, Indians were not at a total loss to understand them.

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<sup>14</sup>Bragdon, *Native People*, 184-230; Kraft, *Lenape*, 161-194; John Witthoft, *Green Corn Ceremonialism in the Eastern Woodlands* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949), 6-20; Frank G. Speck, *A Study of the Delaware Indian Big House Ceremony* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1931); Jane T. Merritt, "Dreaming of the Savior's Blood: Moravians and the Indian Great Awakening in Pennsylvania," *WMQ*, 3rd. ser., 54 (October 1997): 736-46.

The subjugation of these Indian lifeways began in earnest with the introduction of European diseases and alcohol in the early seventeenth century. Disease hit the New England natives early and hard, wiping out as much as ninety percent of the Massachusetts Bay population in two great epidemics between 1617 and 1633.<sup>15</sup> Epidemics continued into the 1640s, almost destroying the Massachusett tribe and severely reducing most native populations in southern New England. The last decades of the seventeenth century proved to be the worst period for the Lenapes, when over three quarters of their population were obliterated by smallpox and other epidemics.<sup>16</sup> Some New England Indians saw these disastrous events as divine punishment for abandoning their native culture and depended on their shamans or powwaws to intercede and restore health and harmony to the land.<sup>17</sup> This policy would spell trouble for Indian culture, as recurring epidemics and powwow failures led to an increased dependence on English medical techniques and greater susceptibility to missionary rhetoric.<sup>18</sup> Lenapes later in the century recognized the connection between Europeans and the onset of disease, noting that "two of them die for every one Christian" that arrived in America.<sup>19</sup> Alcoholism and drunkenness only exacerbated the devastation, and Europeans always knew them to be dangerous to the native population. One of William Penn's first laws restricted the sale of rum to the Indians, but white traders honored such restrictions in the breach and the

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<sup>15</sup>Robert Cushman, "Cushman's Discourse," in *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, 231-233; Bragdon, *Native People*, 26; John White, *The Planter's Plea* (Rockport, MA: Sandy Bay Historical Society, 1930), 25.

<sup>16</sup>Pastorius, "Description of Pennsylvania," in *Narratives*, Myers, 426.

<sup>17</sup>Henry Whitfield, "The Light Appearing More and More Towards the Perfect Day," in *MHSC*, 3rd ser., vol. 4 (Boston: 1832), 110; Dane Morrison, *A Praying People: Massachusetts Acculturation and the Failure of the Puritan Mission, 1600-1690* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995), 12, 16.

<sup>18</sup>Whitfield, "Light," 134.

<sup>19</sup>Gabriel Thomas, quoted in Sugrue, "Peopling and Depeopling," 13.



problem continued to devastate Indian families and societies.<sup>20</sup> Liquor led to murder and domestic disruption, irrevocably altering native societies for the worse and, along with disease, further reducing Indian populations and making them more vulnerable in the face of the European onslaught.

Indians who survived epidemics and alcoholism faced further cultural devastation through the loss of their lands. Some Englishmen in Massachusetts argued for the seizing of empty or sparsely-occupied Indian lands under the principle of *vacuum domicilium*, which predicated a civil right to land on its subjugation for productive use.<sup>21</sup> However, the majority of Puritan settlers recognized native land claims and were scrupulous in their acquisitions of Indian property.<sup>22</sup> But when the English population mushroomed to 11,000 by 1638, immigrants began using a variety of underhanded processes to gain title to occupied Indian lands, including letting livestock run wild to encourage annoyed Indian neighbors to move, purchasing land from unauthorized, intoxicated, or intimidated Indians, and using the courts to levy petty fines as an effort to foreclose on desired properties.<sup>23</sup> The same pattern characterized Penn's English settlers later in the century. Between 1690 and 1710 the European population more than

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<sup>20</sup>"William Penn's Great Law," in *William Penn: His Own Account of the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians, 1683* ed. Albert Cook Myers (Delaware County, PA: Albert Cook Myers Moylan, 1937), 85; *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Theo. Fenn and Co., 1851), 4: 397, 760 (Also known as *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, hereafter cited as *Pennsylvania Records*); *Pennsylvania Archives* (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns and Co., 1853), 3: 519; *Zeisberger's History*, 90.

<sup>21</sup>John Winthrop Sr., "General Considerations for the Plantation in New England, with an Answer to Seuerall Objections," *Winthrop Papers*, vol. 2, (Boston: Merrymount Press, 1947), 20.

<sup>22</sup>James Warren Springer, "American Indians and the Law of Real Property in Colonial New England," *American Journal of Legal History*, 30 (1986): 25-58.

<sup>23</sup>Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 216; Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 144-45.

tripled in southeastern Pennsylvania, growing from 8,800 to 28,000 colonists, and had tripled again by 1740.<sup>24</sup> Under such pressure, Europeans cheated some Indian land brokers with fraudulent practices, exemplified by larcenies such as the infamous "Walking Purchase" of 1737, which cost the Lenape hundreds of thousands of acres.<sup>25</sup> Loss of Indian hunting and planting grounds, so central in the practical and spiritual lives of both Massachusetts and Pennsylvania Indians, coupled with dramatic population losses from disease and alcoholism, set the stage for European missionaries and their promises of hope and renewal.

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<sup>24</sup> Sugrue, "Peopling and Depeopling," 20.

<sup>25</sup> In the Walking Purchase, land speculators and provincial officials deliberately capitalized on ambiguous language. The treaty called for the purchase of an amount of land across which a man could walk in a day and a half, so speculators cut a path through the forest and hired fast walkers to acquire much more land than the Delawares had intended. See Francis Jennings, "The Scandalous Indian Policy of William Penn's Sons: Deeds and Documents of the Walking Purchase," *Pennsylvania History*, 37 (1970): 19-30; Sugrue, "Peopling and Depeopling," 20-29.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PURITAN PRAYING TOWNS, 1649-1676

New England's Indian population suffered terribly and quickly from the European-Indian exchange. Within the familial, economic, and spiritual devastation caused by the horrible epidemics of the early seventeenth century, they sought renewal through the agency of newly-arrived, powerful religious practitioners and by praying to these missionaries' God. If Indians did not thoroughly understand the tenets of their new Christian belief system, they placed their trust in the missionaries who would lead them through the doctrinal and linguistic mazes that would lead to divine approbation and eternal salvation. If their devastation had not been so terrible they might never have followed such a path, and in most localities Indians maintained traditional lifeways throughout the seventeenth century. But the Massachusetts, Nipmucs and other Indians who entered the Puritan praying towns had few options open to them. They had nowhere to move to find new lands for planting and hunting, and their own powwaws and spirituality had failed to answer their needs. Grim necessity led the praying Indians into the Puritan fold, where they internalized the lessons of their teachers and the humility demanded of all God's visible saints.

Efforts to "plante sincere relligion" among the natives had long been proposed as a primary motive for colonizing the New World. Indeed, the first Massachusetts charter encouraged the colonists to set a good example so that they "maie wynn and incite the Natives of Country, to the Knowledg and Obedience of the onlie true God and Sauior of Mankinde," which was, after all,

"the principall Ende of this Plantation."<sup>26</sup> And Puritan divine John Cotton thought that Indian land for English religion was a fair trade. "As you partake in their land, so make them partakers of your precious faith," he advised his flock in 1630. "As you reape your temporalls, so feede them with your spirituals."<sup>27</sup> An insistence on Indian educability and eagerness to embrace Christianity figured prominently in literature of the era and became a lasting staple of colonialist mythology until revolutionary times.<sup>28</sup> But these were not the only, or even the most important, goals. For their first two decades in America, the installation of a government "both ciuill and ecclesiasticall" and establishment of a sound society in service to God were the primary Puritan objectives and the stakes could not have been higher for worldwide Christianity. "If wee shall deale falsely with our God in this worke wee haue undertaken," warned John Winthrop, "Wee shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned to curses upon us till wee be consumed out of the good land wither wee are a goeing."<sup>29</sup> Creating a model for the worldwide Protestant movement was a real and continuing concern for New England Puritans, and it dominated both civil and religious plans for New England colonies during the first decade of settlement. Until the 1640s, Puritan ministers were too busy changing the world to make serious evangelical efforts among the Massachusetts Bay natives.

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<sup>26</sup>First Massachusetts Charter (March 4, 1629), in Francis Newton Thorpe, ed., *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws*, vol. III. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 1857.

<sup>27</sup>John Cotton, "God's Promise to His Plantations," in *Old South Leaflets* no. 53 (Boston: Directors of the Old South Work, Old South Meeting House, n.d.), 14.

<sup>28</sup>James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 131-33; William Kellaway, *The New England Company 1649-1776: Missionary Society to the American Indians* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc. 1961), 2-4.

<sup>29</sup>Winthrop, "Modell of Christian Charity," 45-47.

John Eliot, the minister of Roxbury, began teaching local Indians to "pray to God" at the small Indian village of Nonetum in 1646, at the wigwam of a petty Massachusetts sachem, Waban.<sup>30</sup> From the very beginning, Eliot encouraged prayer as the most fundamental form of worship, and "praying to God" soon became the Indian euphemism for practicing Christianity. Initially, Indians heard prayers spoken in English, partly because of Eliot's unfamiliarity with the native language and partly because "an unknowne tongue" would "let them know that this dutie in hand was serious and sacred." This seemingly high-church use of mystery and wonder was only temporary and Eliot soon learned enough of the native tongue to frame Indian catechisms and to preach from scripture.<sup>31</sup> From the start, Indians expressed curiosity about Christian cosmology, nature, and especially the fine points of prayer. "Whether . . . do I pray when my husband prayes if I speak nothing as he doth?" asked one Indian wife. Another woman asked Eliot "Whether a husband should do well to pray with his wife, and yet continue in his passions, & be angry with his wife?"<sup>32</sup> Converted Indians also brought prayer to bear upon family problems. "If a father prayes to God to teach his sons to know him, and he doth teach them himself and they will not learn to know God, what should such fathers do?" asked a man with "rude" children.<sup>33</sup> Religious fidelity also concerned the praying Indians. One asked Eliot, "How they should know when their faith is good, and their prayers good prayers?" Praying to God seemed to confuse the Indians; at least, it engendered healthy skepticism, but they certainly conceptualized prayer as mysterious and powerful. Indians had

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<sup>30</sup>Thomas Shepard, "The Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel Breaking Forth upon the Indians in New England," *MHSC*, 3rd ser., vol. 4, 50.

<sup>31</sup>John Eliot, et al., "The Day-breaking, if not the Sun-Rising of the Gospell With the Indians in New England," *MHSC*, 3rd ser., vol. 4, 3; Gookin, "Historical Collections," 168-69.

<sup>32</sup>Shepard, "Clear Sun-shine," *MHSC*, 3rd ser., vol. 4, 41-42.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 46-47.

always communicated with supernatural forces through visions and dreams, but as Christians they could initiate this communication at any time. English prayer presented the Indians with a powerful reconceptualization of their own notions of supplication and spiritual contact through dreams, and it is not surprising that "praying to God" came to stand for Christianity itself in the minds of many converts.

Of course, Indians in New England did not swallow the Puritans' religion whole. Eliot and other missionaries recorded several series of Indian questions covering points of theology, cosmology, and nature and sent the results to the newly-formed Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England in 1649 to prove that the Indians' "soules be in a searching condition after the great points of Religion and Salvation."<sup>34</sup> One of Eliot's audience wondered at biblical inconsistencies, asking "Whether did God make hell before Adam sinned?" Others asked questions of practical cosmology, such as, "Doth the Devil dwell in us as we dwell in a house?" Christianity also presented the natives with logical difficulties, prompting one to inquire "Why must we love our enemies, and how shall we doe it?" Another asked, "I see why I must feare Hell, and do so every day. But why must I feare God?" And still another tried to reconcile the traditional Indian emphasis on dreams and visions with Christian notions of reward and punishment, asking "Whether does God make bad men dream good Dreams?" And more practical neophytes wondered at the relationship between temporal duties and spiritual obligations, wondering if "When God saith, Honour thy Father, doth he mean three Fathers? our Father,

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<sup>34</sup>Eliot's communications to the Society were part of a series of tracts written by several different ministers to aid the missionary organization in their fundraising efforts, and so should be viewed with appropriate skepticism. See Kellaway, *The New England Company*, 21-24; Edward Winslow, ed., "The Glorious Progresse of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England," *MHSC*, 3rd ser., vol. 4, 84-86.

our Sachim, and our God?"<sup>35</sup> Such inquisitiveness may have represented a form of resistance and confrontation used by Indians who realized the cultural danger represented by the missionaries, and especially by powwaws who felt threatened by the ministers.<sup>36</sup> But Eliot and other missionaries could differentiate thoughtful curiosity from indignant resistance. If the questions were attempts to rebuff the missionaries, it is unlikely that Eliot would relay such signs of failure to the Society and try to pass them off as successes. Indians wondered and worried about the new religion itself and its impact on their domestic and spiritual lives, and a significant number of them displayed this healthy skepticism in their questions to ministers.

Praying Indians had good reason to be curious and skeptical about Puritan doctrine. Puritan conversion had little in common with any Indian traditions, and the complicated mazes of dogma required of those wishing to enter the church in full communion could drive even seasoned Protestants to tears of desperation. In Puritan theology God predestined election to the ranks of full communion, and aspiring communicants suffered through an agonizing morphology of conversion to prove the presence of saving grace, seesawing back and forth between awareness of God's love and power and humiliation and despair for one's own sinful state. Furthermore, Puritan elders expected prospective communicants to relate their personal spiritual journey and demonstrate their knowledge of Christian doctrine in formal

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<sup>35</sup>For full lists of questions by inquisitive Indians, see Shepard, "Clear Sun-shine," 46-47; Winslow, "Glorious Progresse," 84-86, 91-92; Whitfield, "Light," 128-33. For questions posed to the Indians to test their doctrinal knowledge, see Henry Whitfield, ed., "Strength Out of Weaknesse," *MHSC* 3rd ser. vol. 4, 192-93; John Eliot, "A Late and Further Manifestation of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New England," *MHSC*, 3rd ser., vol. 4, 277-84.

<sup>36</sup>James P. Ronda, "'We Are Well As We Are': An Indian Critique Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions," *WMQ*, 3rd ser., 34 (Jan. 1977): 66-91.

confessions before their assembled congregation.<sup>37</sup> Eliot did not excuse his converts from this requirement, and though the process took almost eight years, enough Indians passed through the dogmatic gauntlet to establish a Christian community in Natick.<sup>38</sup> While a specific formula of enlightenment and debasement characterized all Puritan confessions, their language shows how fully the Indians internalized the qualities of humility and "reduction" sought by their English teachers. Ponampam, a Natick Indian, despaired in a preliminary confession, "I am ashamed of my sins, my heart is broken, and melteth in me; I am angry at my self..." Another Natick convert, Nishohkou, declared, "I am dead in sin, Oh! that my sins might die... Now I know I deserve to go to Hell ... Oh, I desire pardon: but I sometimes think Christ doth not delight in me because I do much play the hypocrite."<sup>39</sup> Praying Indians, especially those who aspired to full communion in the Puritan faith, absorbed a sense of humility and self-doubt not evident in their own spiritual or mundane traditions.

Reading scripture was fundamental to any good Protestant, so missionaries laid plans to introduce their converts to the world of letters. Reading and writing seemed especially wondrous to all Indians in America upon first contact, a factor used with devastating effect by French Recollect and Jesuit missionaries to prove the superior power of European culture. But by the time of Eliot's first evangelical forays into the woods, print culture was already a familiar concept to Indians in New England, and Protestant conceptions of literacy and vernacular Bible reading as empowering and

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<sup>37</sup>Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), 68-69, 89.

<sup>38</sup>Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 238-40.

<sup>39</sup>Eliot, ed. "Tears of Repentance," *MHSC*, 3rd ser., vol. 4, 243, 250-52.



definitive qualities of Reformed piety further demystified literacy.<sup>40</sup> Eliot prepared catechisms in the Indian languages as early as 1647, and in 1663, with the help of a literate Indian known as James Printer, he published *Mamusse Wunneetupanatamwe Up-Biblum God*, a Bible in the Massachusett language.<sup>41</sup> Missionaries encouraged bilingual ability as part of the evangelical process, especially among "the children and youth," a process that would have profound cultural ramifications for the literate and illiterate alike.<sup>42</sup> These efforts among the Indians coincided with attempts by the Puritan elite to control printed information among the English laity and gain scriptural authority for their own writings, but a panoply of outside sources available to the settlers of early New England ensured diversity and dynamism in their language, belief systems, and world views.<sup>43</sup> By teaching Indians to read within the confines of religious missionizing, the ministers may have hoped to gain a captive audience and thus to control the printed and oral sources available to their native converts, just as they tried to control the dissemination of printed material within their own communities.

. Christianity and English culture provided the praying Indians with a means of gaining empowerment and advantage among Indian bands exposed to changing social and political conditions, though it also necessitated the loss of traditional means of attaining social and cultural goals.<sup>44</sup> But English

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<sup>40</sup>Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 102-104; Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 98-99.

<sup>41</sup>Morrison, *Praying People*, 101.

<sup>42</sup>Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The "Praying Indians" of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *WMQ*, 3rd ser., 31 (Jan. 1974): 43; Gookin, "Historical Collections," 219.

<sup>43</sup>David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 21-70.

<sup>44</sup>Harold W. Van Lonkhuyzen, "A Reappraisal of the Praying Indians: Acculturation, Conversion, and Identity at Natick, Massachusetts, 1646-1730," *NEQ*, 63 (1990): 396-428.

missionaries had goals of their own. They wished both to convert and to "civilize" Indians, for in the English conception of society the two were inseparable. Indians lived "unfixed, confused, and ungoverned" lives, "uncivilized and unsubdued to labor and order," and required a "pious magistracy and christian government" because of their especially "rude, uncultivated, and barbarous" natures.<sup>45</sup> English writers spoke always of "reducing" the Indians from the heights of barbarism to the soft plateau of civility as a necessary precondition for conversion.<sup>46</sup> Whether conversion necessitated civility or not, English settlers certainly desired 'civilized' Indian neighbors, except perhaps for those who preferred dead Indians to anglicized ones. But in the direct cultural interchange between praying Indians and English missionaries, each had reasonable and seemingly achievable goals. Praying Indians wanted to preserve their lives and to restore their harmonious relationship with nature and were willing to take on as much Englishness as necessary to do so. Missionaries wanted to make good Christians and good neighbors and were determined to introduce as much 'civility' among the Indians as they could. And if Indians were to be anglicized, then they must live as Englishmen did: wearing English clothes, observing English marital customs, working in English occupations, and most of all, living in English-style towns.

In all, the Puritans built fourteen praying towns beginning in 1649, though seven of those built among the Nipmucs in Western Massachusetts were late additions that lasted only a year before being destroyed in King Philip's War. Eventually 1,100 Christian Indians entered the towns, with 500 in the seven older towns, and forty percent were baptized.<sup>47</sup> The English granted

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<sup>45</sup>Winslow, "Glorious Progresse," 90; Gookin, "Historical Collections," 177.

<sup>46</sup>Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 135-136.

<sup>47</sup>Axtell, *After Columbus*, 108.

land for the towns for three reasons: to "prevent differences and contention among the English and Indians" over land tenure, to "secure unto them and their posterity places of habitation," and so that "they may cohabit together, without which neither religion or civility can well prosper."<sup>48</sup> Remnants of the Nonanetum Massachusetts constructed the first praying town, Natick, in 1650, which consisted of "three long streets . . . with house lots for every family" surrounded by "a handsome large fort." While ministers encouraged English house forms, many Indians kept their native wigwams, which were warmer and less "chargeable to build," and easier to move to "avoid annoyance by fleas."<sup>49</sup> After years of preparation, the Natick converts established the first Indian church in 1660. Hassanamesitt's praying Indians founded a second church the following year, and native deacons and pastors led both congregations.<sup>50</sup> Natick residents preserved some traditional autonomy, including important leadership positions for their own sachems, but they made concessions to English society as well. In response to neighbors' complaints that "unruly" Natick residents might "come loytering and filtching about" in town, the Christian Indians agreed to follow the existing English civil codes and a new set of "Conclusions and Orders." The first rule imposed a fine for drunkenness (20 s.), probably the most common Indian threat to the colony's peace. The second carried the same fine, and insisted "That there shall by no more *Pawwowing* amongst the Indians," though the problem apparently did not abate, necessitating higher and higher fines which eventually reached £5 by the 1670s.<sup>51</sup> Christian Indians designated Indian constables, magistrates, and courts to administer the orders and to enforce

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<sup>48</sup>Gookin, "Historical Collections," 179.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 181-185.

<sup>51</sup>Shepard, "Clear Sun-shine," 39; Gookin, "Historical Collections," 154.

discipline.<sup>52</sup> They had made a healthy start toward anglicization and acceptance into the Christian community, as exemplified by Eliot's glowing reports to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. But that glow disguised the changes taking place in Indian society and in their relations with the English.

Tension with nearby colonists and unconverted natives characterized life in the praying towns during the 1660s. English colonists were skeptical about the missionary efforts and were none too pleased about Indians living only a few miles away, a fact not lost on the natives themselves. One Natick resident questioned the colonists' right to criticize the Indians' efforts, and wondered why, if they were concerned about these matters, they did not "go three or four miles to some of our meetings, and to observe what was said or done there?" As to complaints about wayward Indian loiterers and drunkards, the praying Indian wondered how critics would feel if "all the English should be judged by the worst of them . . . to condemn the righteous with the wicked."<sup>53</sup> But land hunger took precedence over concerns about ethnic differences and civil order. The adjacent town of Dedham had disputed its boundaries with Natick since its establishment in 1650, and the resulting land dispute threatened the praying town's existence and inflamed settlers' intolerance for their Indian neighbors. Eliot knew that land hunger motivated the Dedham colonists and successfully defended his followers in court, but his success was bittersweet.<sup>54</sup> Through legal wrangling that

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<sup>52</sup>Whitfield, "Strength," 126; Gookin, "Historical Collections," 184.

<sup>53</sup>Whitfield, "Strength," 126.

<sup>54</sup>The two separate suits in the Natick-Dedham land dispute were *Dwight and Richards v. Speene* (1661) and *Town of Dedham v. the Indians at Natick* (1662). In both cases and their subsequent appeals, English juries found for Dedham, but magistrates continued to overturn the verdicts until the litigants settled on a compromise. See *Massachusetts Archives* (microform, Boston: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Archives Division, 1977) 30:96-98; Morrison, *A Praying People*, 136-49.

Indians could have understood only imperfectly, land-hungry settlers dragged Christian Indians rudely into the rising climate of litigation and disagreement that characterized New England society in the 1660s. To add additional tension, Iroquois bands, always a threat to the western marches, began to attack praying Indians in the 1650s. Mohawks attacked the praying town of Wamesit in the 1660s, killing only "one or two;" nevertheless, a climate of fear and desperation settled upon the praying towns.<sup>55</sup> In a disastrous punitive raid into the heart of Mohawk country, the Christian Indians lost at least "fifty of their chief men."<sup>56</sup> Trouble closer to home further inflamed tensions. Pokanoket sachem Metacom, or King Philip, increasingly distrusted English missionaries and their attempts to convert area Indians and restricted their efforts in his territory. Christian Indians also began to backslide and return to their native ways.<sup>57</sup> These conflicts, coming at a time of extreme soul-searching and desperation on the parts of many Puritan divines, came to a head in 1675 with the murder of a fascinating individual.

John Sassamon, a "very cunning and plausible *Indian*," embodied the acculturated ideal sought by Christian Indians and missionaries alike. Literate in English, Sassamon worked variously as a schoolteacher, a preacher, an interpreter, a spy, and an editor. However, his loyalties changed over the years and eventually he served both King Philip and the English in diverse functions. "He was observed to conform more to English manners than any other Indian," wrote Ipswich minister William Hubbard in 1677, a quality that made Sassamon both valuable and threatening to English and Indians alike because of the ambiguous nature of his allegiances.<sup>58</sup> Ostensibly, he learned

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<sup>55</sup>Gookin, "Historical Collections," 162-64.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>57</sup>Van Lonkhuysen, "Reappraisal of the Praying Indians," 419-20.

<sup>58</sup>Jill Lepore, "Dead Men Tell No Tales: John Sassamon and the Fatal Consequences of Literacy," *American Quarterly*, 46 (Dec. 1994): 479-512;

of King Philip's plans to attack the Plymouth Colony and hastened to warn the authorities, though he knew it would mean his death if the Pokanoket sachem found out.<sup>59</sup> Apparently, he was then assassinated, probably by agents of King Philip, but the exact reason is unknown.<sup>60</sup> Sassomon's death inflamed English tensions with the Pokanokets, which had already increased because of a breakdown in Philip's reciprocity-based political strategy with the Plymouth Colony. When three of Philip's men were arrested, tried, and executed for the murder, the sachem knew that his reciprocal strategy had failed, and in June 1675 he readied his forces for war.<sup>61</sup> Sassamon, then, passed into myth as the "first Christian martyr of the Indians, for it is evident he suffered death upon the account of his Christian profession, and fidelity to the English."<sup>62</sup> In Sassamon, all the tensions and promise of cultural collision came together in one person, making it both fitting and ironic that his assassination should spark New England's bloodiest Indian war.

The particulars of King Philip's War have been fully explored elsewhere.<sup>63</sup> However, the wartime experiences of the Natick Indians point

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William Hubbard, *The Present State of New England* (Bainbridge, NY: York Mail-Print, Inc., 1972), 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> Lepore, "Dead Men Tell No Tales," 15.

<sup>60</sup> Sassomon's death may have been simply a political assassination. However, according to one report, Metacomet consigned Sassamon to confinement for daring to preach in his town, but on the way to prison he kept preaching to his captors, who, "not liking his Discourse, immediately Murthered him." See Nathaniel Saltonstall, "The Present State of New England With Respect to the Indian War," in *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699*, Charles H. Lincoln, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 24.

<sup>61</sup> James Drake, "Symbol of a Failed Strategy: The Sassamon Trial, Political Culture, and the Outbreak of King Philip's War," *American Indian and Culture Research Journal*, 19 (1995): 130.

<sup>62</sup> Gookin, *Historical Account*, 440.

<sup>63</sup> Douglas Edward Leach, *Flintlock and Tomahawk* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1958); Russell Bourne, *The Red King's Rebellion: Racial Politics in New England* (New York: Atheneum, 1990); Jenny Hale Pulsipher, "Massacre at Hurtleberry Hill: Christian Indians and English Authority in Metacom's War," *WMQ*, 3rd ser., 53 (July 1996): 459-486; Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

out the ambivalent state of their position in Puritan society. Praying Indians served the English faithfully throughout the war, but this did not assuage the "animosity and rage of the common people," who felt that, because some nearby unconverted Indians had joined King Philip, "all Indians were reckoned to be false and perfidious." The Massachusetts Bay Council passed orders confining the praying Indians to their towns in August 1675 and authorized anyone who found an Indian in violation of the orders to "examine," arrest, and kill the offender on sight. This confinement was an extreme hardship for the Indians, who still depended largely upon hunting for their livelihood. Several such "examinations" and summary executions followed, usually of Indians found hunting in the woods. In October 1675, settlers raised "new clamors and reports" against the Natick Indians; specifically, an act of arson was attributed to them (an old "house or barn" had burned, "not worth ten shillings.") This did not fool Daniel Gookin, the colony's superintendant of Indian affairs, who knew that "This contrivance against the Natick Indians obtained that which it was designed for, viz. the passing of an order in General Court, forthwith to remove them from their place unto Deer Island," a deserted, storm-battered rock in Boston Harbor. They stayed there for two years without adequate food or shelter, eventually joined by praying Indians rounded up from other towns, increasing the population of the tiny island to over five hundred. The praying Indians were completely at the mercy of the English; in one notorious incident, a militia commander formed a company of men to "go down to Deer Island, and kill all the praying Indians," in response to the burning of Medford by King Philip's men. Cooler heads in the Council prevailed, but the incident demonstrates the level of ethnocentric intolerance and war hysteria at work in the colony. When Deer Island became drastically overpopulated, the Council interned some Indians on

nearby Long Island "in a suffering state." In May 1677, after many Indians died of disease and starvation, the Council passed an order releasing the Indians from the island as long as the removal could be performed "without charge to the country." Converted Indians had never been a comfort to nearby settlers, and with the tensions of war ethnic xenophobia erupted and dominated the colony's Indian policies.<sup>64</sup>

After the war, Gookin described the intolerant acts committed against the Indians in an inflammatory pamphlet in which he compared the unfortunate victims to early Christian martyrs, remarking that even more could be reported "concerning these poor, despised sheep of Christ."<sup>65</sup> In fact, King Philip's War had reversed the momentum of Eliot's efforts to 'civilize' the Indians. The General Court concentrated all Christian Indians in the four praying towns that survived the war and later consigned unconverted Indians to them as well.<sup>66</sup> Praying Indians had always counted on Eliot and Gookin to defend them against the calumnies and intolerance of white neighbors, but neither partisan could live forever. Gookin died "a poor man" in 1687, though he left his efforts in the hands of his son Samuel, who tried to reverse his family's fortunes by cheating some of the Natick Indians out of their land.<sup>67</sup> Eliot died three years later, leaving an exhausted mission program behind. By 1698 only ten church members remained in Natick and only one child could read. Furthermore, the old pressures of disease, white encroachment, and violent attacks by the Mohawks continued, reducing the Indian population of Natick progressively over the next century.<sup>68</sup> While Indian towns and

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<sup>64</sup>Gookin, *Historical Account*, 449-60, 473, 494, 496, 516, 517.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 523.

<sup>66</sup>Henry W. Bowden and James P. Ronda, *John Eliot's Indian Dialogues: A Study in Cultural Interaction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 54.

<sup>67</sup>Gookin, "Historical Collections," 229; Van Lonkhuyzen, "Reappraisal of the Praying Indians," 422.

<sup>68</sup>Van Lonkhuyzen, "Reappraisal of the Praying Indians," 422-26.



enclaves within white communities survived into the nineteenth century, the old praying towns, especially Natick, took the brunt of cultural change. By 1764, only 37 natives remained. When Gookin's "Historical Collections of the Indians in New England" was reprinted in 1792, only "one family of five persons, and two single women" remained in what had once been the principal praying town.<sup>69</sup> By then Natick had long since ceased to operate as a communal Indian village, and the town's lands had been sold bit by bit throughout the eighteenth century to relieve the miseries of debt and dependence.<sup>70</sup> Slowly and steadily, Indians disappeared into the northern and western countryside. With their traditional ways forgotten and their lands transformed into the rocky, sloping farms of Yankee tradition, the Puritan praying Indians faded into the background of New England history. Such a tale of bravery, declension, and ultimate loss, as prefigured in 1677 by Daniel Gookin's strained identification of the praying Indians as "the first professors, confessors, if I may not say martyrs, of the Christian religion among the poor Indians in America" fit well with the traditions of Protestant martyrdom. Apparently the sheep were gone, passing on to an unseen place where the foul touch of hatred and greed could no longer afflict them.

The true story of the praying Indians after their release from their island concentration camps is considerably more complicated than the one presented in Gookin's myth. By humbly accepting their lot as internees, the converts became "friend Indians," which entitled them to English protection and a measure of economic assistance, but also permanently identified them as subordinates within the colony.<sup>71</sup> But the absorption of Calvinist concepts of

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<sup>69</sup>Gookin, "Historical Collections," 195.

<sup>70</sup>Van Lonkhuyzen, "Reappraisal of the Praying Indians," 425.

<sup>71</sup>Jean O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chap. 3.

humility, and subservience to authority did not translate into acquiescence or total submission for the Indians any more than it did for their white counterparts. Indians continued to argue for their land rights throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to such an extent that hostile white settlers began to complain of the natives' "proud and surly behavior."<sup>72</sup> Neither did acceptance of Christian humility mean a total abandonment of Indian traditions. Indians in eastern Massachusetts survived in the aftermath of King Philip's War through a mixture of traditional and English lifeways, and were successful at maintaining substantial lives. Indians were not "divided in their desires" between traditional and anglicized lifeways, as Samuel Sewell reported in 1710, but rather maintained a tension between the two influences as a successful survival mechanism.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Indian survival methods were successful at preserving a measure of traditional culture until the late eighteenth century, when losses incurred through disease, debt, military service, and the increasingly common sales of Indian lands forced more serious cultural changes upon the praying Indians. Indians in eastern Massachusetts survived, but in greatly diminished numbers and with a new, homogeneous ethnic identity that overrode older tribal, familial, and religious distinctions, allowing the surrounding white population to more easily marginalize the natives.<sup>74</sup> But marginalization is not disappearance, and even without towns or lands the Indians survived in enclaves within white communities or as migrant workers, and many still retain traces of their ethnic heritage in the present. Indeed, New England's Indians never really disappeared at all, as recent interrogations of misleading nineteenth-century

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<sup>72</sup>Daniel R. Mandell, *Behind the Frontier: Indians in Eighteenth-Century Eastern Massachusetts* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996); chap. 2.

<sup>73</sup>O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, chap. 4.

<sup>74</sup>Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 203-208.

histories and ethnographies make clear.<sup>75</sup> Professors and confessors of Christianity are accurate descriptions of praying Indians, but Gookin was hasty in making the "poor, despised" converts into martyrs: New England's Indians survived their cultural encounters with the English.

While surviving, the praying Indians clearly entered a state of dependence in English America. In danger of losing finances for their regularly scheduled English lectures, which attracted nearby English settlers and thus promoted "not only religion, but Civility," Natick's Indians wrote to their "spiritual father" John Eliot in 1684 to ask for his intercession with the New England Company.<sup>76</sup> Natick "Friend Indians" serving and suffering in King William's War "humbly" petitioned the Council for provisions in 1689.<sup>77</sup> And more notably, the language of subservience saturated the documents that most exemplified the Indians' dispossession: the petitions for permission to sell Indian lands. Like Puritan conversion narratives, the Natick petitions followed a consistent morphology. After a brief relation of how the particular landholder came to own the land in question, a pathetic tale of hardship and woe would follow, detailing a cycle of debt, a terrible accident as a result of work or wartime service, a debilitating disease, or simply a desire to better the landholder's economic circumstances. Finally, the request would be made to allow the land sale, which the Council would usually approve.<sup>78</sup> Straining

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<sup>75</sup>Donna Keith Baron, J. Edward Hood, and Holly V. Izard, "They Were Here All Along: The Native American Presence in Lower-Central New England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *WMQ* 3rd ser., 53 (July 1996): 561-586.

<sup>76</sup>Sixteen Indians at Natick, Massachusetts, to the Rev. John Eliot, 19 March 1683," in *Some Correspondence Between the Governors and Treasurers of the New England Company in London and the Commissioners of the United Colonies in America, the Missionaries of the Company, and Others Between the Years 1657 and 1712*, ed. J. w. Ford (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1896), 74-76.

<sup>77</sup>*Massachusetts Archives* 31:13.

<sup>78</sup>Dozens of petitions for the sale of Indian lands throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be found in the Indian volumes of the *Massachusetts Archives*, vol. 30-33.

under the weight of crippling losses, Indians found themselves in the unfortunate position of begging for their own dispossession.

New England's Indians never became thoroughly English or remained thoroughly Indian, but rather used the best combination of both worlds to survive in the wake of a hostile cultural invasion. While this process involved resistance, assertiveness, and accommodation, it also required patience and humility. Christian Indians knew that they had entered a world in which the only way to survive might be to humbly submit to the authority of the English, even if that submission led to dependence and poverty. The experiences of the New England praying Indians in their towns and in their confinement during King Philip's War served as harbingers and preparations for subsequent struggles to survive.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### MORAVIAN MISSION TOWNS, 1746-1765

Unlike their New England counterparts, the Indians of eastern Pennsylvania had a few options open to them. Large inland regions far from the reach of the invading white populations and hostile Iroquois offered natives the chance to sustain their traditional lifeways. Throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, most Indians in the region migrated beyond the Allegheny River and began new lives. Some remained in eastern Pennsylvania by choice, and counted on the intercession of their new German-speaking friends, the Moravian missionaries. The newcomers were different from the English settlers in language, customs, and beliefs. In some ways, the Moravians were as different from the other white settlers as were the Indians, a fact driven home by the settlers' frequent condemnations of the German Pietists. Furthermore, these strange people held beliefs about blood and ritual that coincided with Indian traditions. Moravian Indians were never great in number, for the available survival alternatives made staying in close proximity to hostile white settlers a serious gamble. But the Indians who chose to stay in Moravian mission towns found opportunities to enjoy their traditional quality of life without leaving familiar lands. In the end they discovered much more, including a new inspirational figure in the image of the bloody, tortured body of the Lamb of God.

By the 1740s, the ravages of the European invasion had dramatically altered the lives of Pennsylvania's Indians and most had already chosen to relocate to safer grounds. For many decades Lenapes, along with neighboring

Shawnees and Senecas, had been migrating through the Allegheny region into the Ohio River basin. After 1724 they established new multiethnic towns, from Shamokin and Wyoming on the Susquehanna to a spate of new settlements on the Allegheny and in the Ohio Valley. These Indians moved by choice, as a way to find new, productive hunting and planting grounds and to put distance between themselves and the encroaching white settlers. As Indian "pioneers," they sought to recreate their traditional lifeways in a new land.<sup>79</sup> In addition, their westward movement contained a spiritual component. Some Lenapes believed that a land that no longer answered their needs or remained in harmony with them was *kwulakan*, or taboo, and must be abandoned to please the deities.<sup>80</sup> New lands to the west would allow the Indians to restore their harmonious relationship with both the spiritual and temporal world. But for those who chose to remain behind, a new model of economy and spirituality became available. The Moravians had arrived and they offered the troubled Indians salvation, if not security.

The German missionaries of the *Unitas Fratrum*, commonly called the Moravians, sought "souls for the Lamb," not as an extension of statecraft or a method of social control but out of a genuine evangelical zeal befitting their Pietist origins. Their legacy as forerunners of the Protestant Reformation, dating to the fiery times of their founder John Hus in the early fifteenth century, contained numerous examples of bravery, persecution, and martyrdom and prepared them for the hardships of worldwide evangelism. In 1743 Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the benefactor and restorer of the Moravian Church, visited the Brethren in Bethlehem, their new home in

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<sup>79</sup>Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 20.

<sup>80</sup>Jay Miller, "Kwulakan: The Delaware Side of Their Movement West," *Pennsylvania Archaeologist*, 45 (1975): 45-46.

Pennsylvania, and instructed them to convert Indians directly through appeals to the heart and mind rather than through mass conversion of whole groups through economic means, ensuring that the task would be long and arduous.<sup>81</sup> But the Moravians already possessed valuable experience in missionary work after founding missions on St. Thomas in 1732, on the Greenland coast in 1733, and on the Cape of Good Hope in 1737.<sup>82</sup> No political power or diplomatic initiative motivated the Moravian missionaries. Their motives were their own, inspired by a passage in the Book of Acts which instructed all Christians to turn non-believers from darkness to light.

Missionary work required strong support at home, which the Moravians' communal domestic arrangements in Bethlehem amply supplied. This "General Economy" ensured the staples of life for all inhabitants; the community as a whole benefited from all labor and produce and in return supplied the inhabitants and missionaries in the field with their individual daily needs. The General Economy included some fixtures that troubled their Christian neighbors, such as planned marriages, but also organized living arrangements and architectural planning into a harmonious, organic system. All residents observed a strict daily regimen of work and religious observance, and all felt that they contributed to the overarching religious purpose of their community. Bethlehem prospered for twenty years under this communal system and the efficient leadership of Bishop Augustus Spangenberg, and their success instructed other Moravian communities around the world, including their sacred home settlement of Herrnhut in Saxony.<sup>83</sup> It was no

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<sup>81</sup>"Zinzendorf's Account of His Experience Among the Indians," in *Memorials of the Moravian Church*, William C. Reichel, ed. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1870), 116-17.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 117-18.

<sup>83</sup>Beverly Prior Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem: From Communal Mission to Family Economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), xv, 13-14, 86-89.

wonder that the Moravians chose a planned Indian town as the best method of converting and nurturing their Indian charges. When tensions flared in Iroquoia in 1745, Moravian missionaries evacuated Christian Indians from their mission in the Mahican town of Shekomeko and brought them to safer ground near Bethlehem. Moravian leaders began plans immediately for a separate Indian town where converts could live "in their own way," while remaining separate from the disruptive influences of non-Christian Indians and hostile white traders and settlers.<sup>84</sup>

The Mahicans and Lenapes who settled in the temporary town of Friedenshütten in 1746 and in the permanent, planned community of Gnadenhütten the following year found themselves in a different world. According to the missionaries, the Indians of Gnadenhütten went happily about their daily work, rejoicing in their newfound faith, but these reports probably represent Moravian optimism as much as they reflect Indian reality. The process of winning "souls for the lamb" altered some Indian lifeways irrevocably.<sup>85</sup> The impermanent, mobile sapling and bark structures of Indian tradition were replaced by log houses with shingled roofs, arranged in ordered lots. Hunting and fishing remained central to the native economy, but Moravian Indians replaced traditional horticulture with European agricultural techniques, including use of the plow and draft animals.<sup>86</sup> Moravian piety required personal industry, and mission Indians supplemented their income by selling surplus crops and wares and operating a sawmill.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Loskiel, *History*, I: 84.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.; Kenneth G. Hamilton, "Cultural Contributions of the Moravian Missions Among the Indians," *Pennsylvania History*, 18 (1951): 3. Hamilton's study of mission life was based largely upon his translations of the papers of John Ettwein, a Moravian bishop living in Bethlehem in the 1750's. Hamilton, himself a Moravian bishop, stressed the positive implications of cultural change.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>87</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 90.



European agriculture and industry represented a completely new form of domestic economy and made the Moravian Indians dependent upon outside sources for supplies and technology. Furthermore, such economic enterprises and the disposable income they generated encouraged old problems, particularly alcohol abuse. For example, Sister Ester, a Christian Indian, begged the Moravians to prevent her husband from building canoes and selling them to white traders, because he "sumtimes [made] a bad use of the Money, being not always able to govern himself."<sup>88</sup> But Moravian ministers hesitated to interfere directly in Indian social relations, especially those between men and women, with the exception of reminding them that God ordained the estate of marriage and that all couples "must remain faithful to each other until death."<sup>89</sup> Missionaries taught English and German to Gnadenhütten's children in European-style schools, and David Zeisberger and other missionaries translated hymnals and spelling books into Lenape and Onondaga.<sup>90</sup> These cultural changes accelerated the loss of Indian traditions, which disconcerted the converts and represented the beginning of their economic dependence on European benefactors. Moravian mission towns mandated serious cultural consequences for native converts, and choosing such a life was not a decision to be made lightly.

Once ensconced in their new town, Moravian Indians seemed to take delight in their new religion. The Moravians recorded many instances of the extreme emotional attachments that Christian Indians felt toward Moravian Christianity and of their spiritual desperation before conversion, though such

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<sup>88</sup>*Moravian Mission Records Among the North American Indians, From the Archives of the Moravian Church* (microform, New Haven: Research Publications, Inc., 1978), reel 5, box 118, folder 5. Hereafter cited as *Moravian Archives*. Note: Baptized Indians received Christian names as a mark of their conversion to Christ.

<sup>89</sup>John Ettwein, quoted in Hamilton, "Cultural Contributions," 11.

<sup>90</sup>Hamilton, "Cultural Contributions," 6-8.

reports tend to follow a consistent pattern of Indian anguish and redemption and require skepticism. In a typical example, Gottlieb, an early convert, "shed many Tears" upon baptism, "Under a Sence of his miserable Condition."<sup>91</sup> It is easy to imagine that the frustration resulting from cultural devastation led Indians to seek Moravian spiritual help. But the transference of Indian desperation into religious zeal should not be overstated, for the Indians found much in Christianity that resonated with their own spiritual traditions. Love-feasts, a tradition dating from the establishment of Herrnhut in 1727 in which Moravians celebrated the end of the workday in joyous dining, prayer, and song, were held regularly in Gnadenhütten.<sup>92</sup> They could also be used to mark special occasions, such as harvests. This would have been a familiar and respected practice for the Lenapes, who traditionally enjoyed feasts and observed ritual celebrations throughout the year.<sup>93</sup> Indians also enjoyed music and singing, though the hymns, trombones, and spinets of the Moravians must have seemed strange and wonderful at first. But Indian converts found Moravian symbolism involving blood and sacrifice to be especially profound. Cults of Christ's wounds had been fixtures in both Catholic and Protestant Christianity for centuries, but the Moravians under Zinzendorf spoke of the blood and wounds of Christ and of the sacrificial lamb in vivid, visceral terms, imagining themselves as tiny, happy creatures nursing on the blood from Christ's side-wound.<sup>94</sup> Indians responded to this imagery; their own traditions held that blood carried part of the soul, and

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<sup>91</sup>Moravian Archives, reel 4, box 116, folder 8.

<sup>92</sup>See also Hamilton, "Cultural Contributions," 4.

<sup>93</sup>Zeisberger, *History*, 137-38.

<sup>94</sup>Gillian Lindt Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds: A Study of Changing Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 12; Smaby, *Transformation*, 28-29.

sacrifices were a familiar concept in Indian rituals.<sup>95</sup> Zinzendorf told of the conversion of one notorious Indian who, during a drunken revel, first heard missionary Christian Heinrich Rauch preach and "did not remember a Word that Rauch said to him save this one word *Blood* which he so often had heard repeated." The Indian wondered, "What manner of Man must that be who looks so pleased and yet speaks always about Blood?" Rauch told the Indian (called John following his conversion) that Jesus's blood had been shed for all souls and that one must have "Blood in his Heart" to overcome wickedness.<sup>96</sup> Nicodemus, one of the earliest Christian converts, told missionary Martin Mack in 1747 "that his Heart was like a Mill Wheel, which when it has much Water goes swiftly. So it was with his Heart, when he received much Blood, it was then brisk, chearfull & Lively, & he run his Course swiftly."<sup>97</sup> The Indian residents of Gnadenhütten observed Bible study and sang hymns, but the mysteries of blood and sacrifice appealed directly to their senses and traditions.

Through the familiar portal of blood adoration, missionaries led the Moravian Indians through the process of conversion. Unlike their Puritan counterparts in the previous century, Moravian missionaries did not call on their converts to negotiate complicated cycles of despair and renewal. Pietism emphasized vital religion, or the importance of personal works and emotional experience over doctrinal knowledge as evidence of saving faith, and the Moravians under Count Zinzendorf took emotionalism a step further: one must love Christ deeply and constantly keep the image of his bloody passion on the cross foremost in one's thoughts and feelings. As one historian has noted, such a joyful, emotional emphasis on the crucifixion and Christ's wounds could

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<sup>95</sup>Harrington, *Religion and Ceremonies*, 53-54, 116-18, 144-45.

<sup>96</sup>Reichel, ed. *Memorials*, 129.

<sup>97</sup>*Moravian Archives*, reel 4, box 116, folder 8.

lead to "a sensual contemplation and passive acceptance of one's status."<sup>98</sup> Stressing emotional exuberance and adoration of Christ's bloody sacrifice, Moravian converts learned to express passivity and humility in the face of earthly challenges. Already familiar with rituals of blood and sacrifice, Moravian Indians now imagined a beloved role model in this tradition hovering before their eyes.

Moravian Indians required intercession in order to live in close proximity to intolerant white settlers and looked to their benefactors for protection as well as religious inspiration. Unfortunately, Moravians in America were a non-confrontational people entering a confrontational situation. Their 'diaspora' method of preaching to other Christians exemplified their passive attitude, and such passivity would seem to ensure stable relations with nearby Christian settlers.<sup>99</sup> However, tensions flared almost immediately upon the establishment of Bethlehem: local settlers accused the Brethren of Sabbath violations and Catholic sympathies and even trying to incite Indians against them.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, European wars in the region called for taking sides, which the non-violent and apolitical Moravians were unwilling to do, making them objects of suspicion for settlers and militiamen. Indeed, Moravians abandoned their first mission to the Iroquois of central New York in 1745 specifically because of English suspicions that the neutral

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<sup>98</sup>Gollin, *Moravians in Two Worlds*, 11, 19.

<sup>99</sup>The Moravian Diaspora involved the worldwide spread of the religion through societies within established Protestant churches. Moravians sought a worldwide reunification of Protestant denominations, and did not distance themselves from the teachings of other churches. One could maintain one's own denominational identity and still be a Moravian, and until the mid nineteenth-century, Diaspora Moravians outnumbered full Moravian communicants. See John R. Weinlick, *The Moravian Church Through the Ages* (Bethlehem, PA: Comenius Press, 1966), 80-81. Non-Moravians frequently visited Moravian services. See Kenneth G. Hamilton, ed., *The Bethlehem Diary*, vol. 1 (Bethlehem, PA: Archives of the Moravian Church, 1971), 28, 33, 35, 58.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 94, 140.

missionaries were in league with France.<sup>101</sup> And when hostilities with France erupted again in 1754, nearby white settlers and militiamen in Pennsylvania suspected the neutral Moravians and their Indian converts of sympathies with the French and their Indian allies.<sup>102</sup> As protectors of the mission Indians, the Moravians needed the support of their white neighbors, which they could never count on from the outset.

Hostile whites did not constitute the only threat to Moravian Indian safety; nearby Indians had always mistrusted the missionaries and vied for their converts' loyalties. For example, Gottlieb's friends on the Susquehanna had threatened to "immediately knock his Brains out" if they found him in the company of the missionaries again.<sup>103</sup> So Gnadenhütten became a target of both white and native hatred, and when tragedy came, it took missionary lives first. On November 24, 1755, a group of Indians descended on Mahoney, a small Moravian farm outside Gnadenhütten, burning the settlement and killing eleven of the thirteen mission workers there. David Zeisberger, just returning from a long stay in Onondaga, missed being killed by only a few minutes.<sup>104</sup> Leaving all their possessions behind, terrified missionaries and converts immediately evacuated Gnadenhütten (which unknown marauders later burned to the ground), and fled to Bethlehem, where they were housed in a special Indian hotel. There the Indian converts lived in apprehension, protected by their Moravian friends but not full members of the Bethlehem community; the German settlers built a separate chapel for the Indians.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Elma E. Gray and Leslie Robb Gray, *Wilderness Christians: The Moravian Mission to the Delaware Indians* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1956), 32.

<sup>102</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 98.

<sup>103</sup>Gray and Gray, *Wilderness Christians*, p. 38; *Moravian Archives*, reel 4, box 116, folder 8, item 1.

<sup>104</sup>*Pennsylvania Records*, 6:736-37; *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1:2:721-22.

<sup>105</sup>Although the Moravians often welcomed Indians as visitors to Bethlehem, they did not necessarily want them to live there. The Indian hotel

While the attack on Gnadenhütten proved conclusively that the Moravians and Christian Indians were not in league with France, any consolation was minimal. The beginning of dependence had come for the Indians and this knowledge was not lost on them. In an address to Governor Robert Morris on November 30, 1755, the Bethlehem Indians pleaded for protection from their white and Indian enemies. They reminded the governor of their peaceful lives and devotion to Christ, commended their Moravian benefactors for their faith and protection and denied any involvement in the recent Indian raids on backcountry settlements. "It is our desire, seeing that we are persuaded that our lives will be principally sought after," they wrote, "To put ourselves as Children under the Protection of this Government."<sup>106</sup> Moravian Indians began new lives as wards and dependents of the colony and of the missionaries.

Moravians always considered the Indians' stay in Bethlehem temporary, and Zinzendorf suggested that a new community be built near Bethlehem as soon as possible. Despite lingering misgivings, the Brethren built the town of Nain one mile from Bethlehem in 1757. Apparently the new town attracted many of the few remaining Indians in the area, and population increased there so rapidly that in 1760 they constructed another town, Wechquetank, twenty miles to the west.<sup>107</sup> The two settlements prospered until 1763, when new troubles began. Some "fanatics," apparently as upset by the Christian Indians' faith as by their proximity, began to spread rumors that a new Indian war in the Ohio country represented divine retribution upon the Europeans

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and church maintained a separation between Europeans and Indians that Bethlehem's citizens strongly desired, even as they worked for the Indians' salvation. See Smaby, *Transformation*, 99.

<sup>106</sup>*Pennsylvania Records*, 6:747-48.

<sup>107</sup>Joseph Mortimer Levering, *A History of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1741-1892, With Some Account of Its Founders and Their Early Activity in America* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Co., 1903), p. 352, 368.

for not destroying the heathens when they had the chance and suggested "that all Indians, without exception, ought to be put to the sword." Such talk had also preceded the destruction of Gnadenhütten, and it understandably upset the Christian Indians who remembered that tragedy.<sup>108</sup> White settlers and militiamen mistrusted Indians performing any activity in the woods, forcing the Moravian Indians to curtail their hunting activities. Sensing the desperation of their situation and seemingly wanting in livelihood (implying that agriculture and industry did not thrive in the two new towns as they had in Gnadenhütten), the disheartened Indians of Wechquetank and Nain petitioned Lt. Gov. James Hamilton for protection. "We are Indians, we are poor," they pleaded, "We have learned no trades, and we must hunt for a Livelihood, as long as there is no War hereabouts, for we have nothing to live on."<sup>109</sup> In order to distinguish themselves from "strange" Indians, the Moravian Indians adopted special signals and conventions of dress and manner, including shortened hair and eschewal of native headdresses and ornaments, and distributed notices among the settlers describing the measures.<sup>110</sup> Regardless of these efforts, tensions continued to increase.

On September 3, 1763, Bernhard Grube, the Moravian missionary at Wechquetank, met with a nervous militia commander, Lieutenant Dodge, who feared that the Moravian Indians "would fall upon the white People," but he would not elaborate upon his fears. Grube reminded him that the Indians enjoyed the governor's protection and he left. The plot thickened two days later, when militia captain Jacob Wetterhold passed through town. He became distressed and anxious at finding no Indians in the settlement (because they

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<sup>108</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 207; Paul A. W. Wallace, ed., *Thirty-Thousand Miles With John Heckewelder*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1958), 72.

<sup>109</sup>*Moravian Archives*, reel 6, box 124, folder 7, item 1.

<sup>110</sup>*Moravian Archives*, reel 6, box 124, folder 7, item 4.

were out hunting) and warned, "If I find one in the Woods far or near, I'll kill him." Once more, Grube calmly reminded the captain that the Indians enjoyed the governor's protection and that they needed to hunt to survive, since their corn crop was not yet ready. Panic had descended upon the region. While the neutral Moravians helped to calm fiery tempers, two white settlers told Grube on September 11 that if the Moravians left, then they would too, "and all the people behind the blew mountains will come in confusion." On September 20, a company of Irish Volunteers arrived and replayed the familiar scene, threatening to kill any Indian who "should be found in the woods, and as soon as any mischief should be done on this side of the Lehy, all Indians would be killed . . . in Town." This time, the governor's protection did not impress the militiamen, who assumed that "no one would regard it."<sup>111</sup> Local militiamen displayed a fear that seemed irrational to Grube, but they had good reason to be afraid for their lives. On August 20, four peaceful Indians traveling from Wechquetank to their home on the Susquehanna had spent the night in an inn on Pocopoco Creek where members of Wetterhold's militia company also lodged. In a drunken frenzy, the militiamen murdered the Christian Indian Zachary, his wife, mother, and young daughter. The victims had relatives at Wechquetank, and Wetterhold had every reason to suspect revenge.<sup>112</sup> Fearing violent retribution, the militia sought an opportunity for a preemptive strike against all area Indians.

Wetterhold and his company were right to be afraid, but not of the Moravian Indians. In October, Grube reported that the Moravians had abandoned Wechquetank because of some "bad news" from the Irish Settlement in Allen's Township.<sup>113</sup> On October 8 an Indian party had

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<sup>111</sup>*Moravian Archives*, reel 6, box 124, folder 4, item 4.

<sup>112</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 208-9; Levering, *History of Bethlehem*, 396.

<sup>113</sup>*Moravian Archives*, reel 6, box 124, folder 4, item 4.



descended upon the home of settler John Stinton, killing eight people including Captain Wetterhold, who died a few days later from his wounds.<sup>114</sup> Now the settlers cried out for revenge, suspecting that the Wechquetank Indians were responsible for the deed. On October 9, fifty incensed settlers advanced upon Wechquetank, but a "neighboring friend" dissuaded them from attacking.<sup>115</sup> Two days later, the entire community of Wechquetank quit their mission town for the Moravian community of Nazareth. Nain Indians fortified their town, and for a few days felt that with government protection they might be safe near their Moravian brothers in nearby Bethlehem. However, the crisis had only begun. On October 9 magistrates arrested Renatus, a Christian Indian of Nain, for the murder of John Stinton, having been identified by the victim's widow.<sup>116</sup> Accompanied by missionary John Jacob Schmick, he was taken to Philadelphia and imprisoned. His arrest incensed local settlers and militia, and amidst their talk of vigilante justice it became clear that the Indians' presence in the region would only exacerbate tensions. The Moravians presented a plan to the Pennsylvania Assembly for the Indians' protection that would restrict them to their Nain and Nazareth plantations, institute daily musters to account for their presence, and supply the Indians with a daily stipend of 3 pence per day to replace their lost livelihood.<sup>117</sup> The Assembly turned the plan down and ordered the Indians to Philadelphia for their own safety. Previously wards of the state, the Moravian Indians became virtual prisoners.

There is, and was, virtually no doubt of the accused man's innocence. Renatus, a Mahican baptized in 1749 and named after Zinzendorf's son, was the

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<sup>114</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 209-10; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 10, 1763.

<sup>115</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 210.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, II: 212-13.

<sup>117</sup>*Moravian Archives*, reel 6, box 124, folder 7, item 5.

respected son of Old Jacob, one of the first three Moravian converts. He and his father had passed through the area of the Stinton home a few days before the attack, and Mrs. Stinton had probably seen them then. But according to the affidavits of eyewitnesses, Renatus and other Nain Indians had solid alibis, and early reports of the crime proved spurious. John Lischert, a tavern keeper who heard that Wetterhold recognized the Indians, went to the wounded captain's deathbed to confirm the report, but Wetterhold replied, "Ach, Gott! Nein, ich weiß es nicht!" (Oh, God! No, I know not who they were!) Another eyewitness debunked claims that one of the attacking Indians cried out a revenge oath against Wetterhold, and still another challenged Mrs. Stinton's ability to identify anyone in the pitch black house where the killing took place. Several people saw Renatus crossing the Lehigh at Bethlehem while the crime took place miles away. Most ridiculous of all, Chillisay and Papunkay, two Delawares of good repute in the colony had seen the true guilty parties fleeing the scene, and had given their names to the governor. There seemed to be no case against the hapless Renatus; once arrested, however, he could not be released safely and acquittal could not be guaranteed. As Weiss asserted in a petition on Renatus's behalf, once in the courtroom no verdict was certain, as any local jury faced a "dreadfull alternative, Either to expose themselves to be Martyrs, have their Farms and Effects set afire for the Sake of an Indian . . . Or else to condemn an innocent man."<sup>118</sup> Still, the Northampton County court was determined to try Renatus, and he languished in jail in Philadelphia while a drama unfolded outside.

The Nain Indians began their trip to protective custody in Philadelphia on November 7, 1763, after first surrendering their arms to the Northampton

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<sup>118</sup>Depositions and other records of Renatus's trial are stored in the *Moravian Archives*, reel 6, box 124, folder 6, items 1-16.

sheriff, which, wrote Loskiel, "most strikingly proved the change wrought in them, for an heathen Indian would rather part with his head than with his gun."<sup>119</sup> Accompanied by Grube, Schmick, and Zeisberger, they plodded down the muddy fifty-mile road to Philadelphia, undergoing constant harassment from the angry settlers in every town they passed. Soldiers would not admit them to their assigned quarters in the Philadelphia barracks, and after standing in the rain for hours, the missionaries led the Indians through the angry Philadelphia crowds to Province Island south of the city. There they rested, virtual prisoners of the colony, while on November 18 malcontents burned Wechquetank to the ground and tried unsuccessfully to inflict the same fate upon Bethlehem itself.<sup>120</sup> Unable to provide for themselves, the 33 refugee families from Nain and Wechquetank, 122 men, women and children, relied solely upon their Moravian benefactors for support. Their situation was desperate, but the Indian refugees felt safe in the care of their Moravian benefactors. Their relief would be short-lived.

On December 14, a group of armed settlers mounted an unprovoked attack on a Conestoga Indian town near Lancaster. Six Indians died, and townspeople conducted the remaining fourteen to the Lancaster jail for their protection, followed by the mob, who broke into the jail and killed them too.<sup>121</sup> The attackers, known to history as the Paxton Boys, then vowed that the Indians at Province Island "should share the same fate."<sup>122</sup> By the end of December it had become certain that armed men were advancing on Philadelphia with the express desire to kill the Moravian Indians. Once more, the Indian refugees fled in the darkness of night. On January 4, they boarded

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<sup>119</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 214.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, II: 215-17.

<sup>121</sup>*Pennsylvania Archives*, 1:4:150-52; *Pennsylvania Records*, 9:89, 92, 95.

<sup>122</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 218.

small boats bound for New York and the protection of Sir William Johnson, the British Secretary of Indian affairs. Mercilessly harassed throughout the journey, they traveled safely as far as Amboy, New Jersey.<sup>123</sup> There, on January 11, a surprising message from New York Governor Cadwallader Colden stopped them in their tracks, identifying "the Indians on the East Side of the Susquehanna" as "the most obnoxious to the People of this Province of any, having done the most mischief," and refusing them entry to the province.<sup>124</sup> General Thomas Gage ordered the Indians back to Philadelphia accompanied by a military guard, who would remain there to protect them.<sup>125</sup> On January 24, the Moravian Indians ended up in the Philadelphia barracks after all. The Paxton Boys approached on February 4. Citizens rushed to the barricades, loading muskets and cursing the Moravian missionaries and their Indian converts who had caused all the trouble. Philadelphia's cannons rang out in warning and citizens and soldiers manned the ramparts, but the rebels never approached. Instead, civic leaders invited representatives of the Paxton mob to enter the barracks and point out any murderous Indians, and when they could not do so, Philadelphia's elders dissuaded the mob from its deadly mission.<sup>126</sup> But the frontier still seethed with hatred for the Christian Indians: a petition of February 13, 1764 signed by several settlers repeated the old charge that the Moravian Indians "were in confederacy with our open Enemies."<sup>127</sup> Once again, the Indians tried to leave the province for New York; once again, fortune did not favor them. They remained in the barracks, where smallpox found them, killing 56 Christian Indians, including old Jacob, Renatus's father, and Renatus's wife and daughter. "It is almost too much too

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., II: 219-21.

<sup>124</sup>*Pennsylvania Records*, 9:120.

<sup>125</sup>*Pennsylvania Records*, 9:123.

<sup>126</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 224-25.

<sup>127</sup>*Pennsylvania Records*, 9: 140.

bear," wept Renatus, "To lose my father, my wife and child, while I myself am confined in prison."<sup>128</sup>

Renatus sat in jail until late June 1764, not unlike his fellow Christian Indians in their barracks. By the time he came to Easton for his trial, the outcome looked more hopeful, for the Moravians had raised a sizable defense fund (£37) and secured the services of the prominent attorney and future patriot, John Dickinson, for Renatus's defense. The jury acquitted Renatus on June 21, 1764, to the disappointment of crowds outside the courthouse who longed for a hanging and meant to have one anyway. A military guard brought Renatus to Philadelphia, where he rejoined his brethren in the barracks.<sup>129</sup> The Moravian Indians could not leave protective custody earlier than December 4, 1764, when Pontiac's Uprising subsided and relations with the Six Nations Iroquois had been stabilized.<sup>130</sup> They stayed on until March 22, 1765, and having no homes left, the 83 remaining Moravian Indians trudged through a heavy snowstorm toward Bethlehem.<sup>131</sup> With their traditional lives gone, their lands forfeited and ruined, and sixty of their Christian brothers and sisters buried in paupers' graves in Philadelphia, the beleaguered sheep returned to their fold and to the hands of their Moravian shepherds.

More travels lay in store for the Moravian Indians. Ironically, the Christian Indians followed the same path as their non-Christian Delaware kinsmen decades before. They settled on the Susquehanna, where they established a town called Friedenshütten and prospered for seven years, but resentful white settlers edged them out once again. So they followed the rest of the Pennsylvania Indians across the Allegheny, settling in Ohio country on

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<sup>128</sup>Loskiel, *History*, II: 227-8, quote on 228.

<sup>129</sup>Levering, *History of Bethlehem*, 402, 404.

<sup>130</sup>Wallace, ed., *Heckewelder*, 404.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 406.

the Muskingum River in 1772. They called their new town Gnadenhütten, hoping its fate would be happier than the first town of that name. It was not. Distrusted by the local Indians and the ever-expanding white population, the Indians and Moravian missionaries suffered their worst disaster of all on the banks of the Muskingum in March 1782, when an American militia company captured and executed ninety Christian Indians, brutally dashing out their brains with clubs and mallets. Those who survived gave up any semblance of maintaining traditional lifeways in exchange for peace and safety. Zeisberger led them to Michigan, where they briefly established another Gnadenhütten, and then to Canada where they ended their journey on the banks of the Thames River in Ontario. There the Christian Indians established the one mission town that would last, the home of the Christian Lenapes who, in Elma E. Gray's bittersweet observation, "accepted Christian precepts but did not inherit the earth."

## CONCLUSION

These two stories of Indian loss, liminality, and ultimate dependence contain striking similarities.<sup>132</sup> In both cases, missionaries encouraged cultural change through the construction of European-style towns as a method of Christian conversion. Life in praying towns of both eras required heavy doses of cultural adjustment for the converts as they struggled to master literacy, new types of industry and agriculture, and unfamiliar dogma, all within earshot of strange music and languages and in the shadow of European architecture. Charismatic missionaries figured prominently in both narratives, especially Eliot and Zeisberger, who in the end became virtually their followers' only benefactors. Both Puritan and Moravian mission towns were sources of tension with white settlers, if for no other reason than that they fostered proximity between Europeans and Indians. In both the Dedham-Natick land dispute and the Renatus trial, Puritan and Moravian ministers used their influence and resources to ensure fair trials before the bar, with surprising success in the face of racial and ethnic intolerance, land hunger, and bloodlust. In their respective moments of truth, Puritan and Moravian

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<sup>132</sup>Liminality describes the middle stage of the *rites de passage* identified by sociologist Arnold van Gennep, during which neophytes, having broken from their previous cultural state, enter a state characterized by "passivity," "malleability," and "reduction to a uniform condition" in order to be "ground down" and "fashioned anew." During the "catechumenate" process in Christianity, in which a neophyte is prepared for baptism and subsequent life as a Christian, the liminal stage is one of both instruction and personal struggle, when the initiate internalizes the lessons and confidence necessary to honor Christian precepts and to withstand struggles with evil. See Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage" and Mark Searle, "The Rites of Christian Initiation" in *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, ed. Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster, and Meredith Little (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1987), 4-18, 457-69.

Indians were imprisoned to protect them from the passions of their intolerant neighbors, whose vengefulness seems irrational in cooler hindsight. And in both cases, the Indians of two centuries met their fates with courage and humility, like legendary Christian martyrs . As stories, the tales of Puritan and Moravian Indians and the downfall of their praying towns appeal to our aesthetic as well as to the intellectual faculties, and inspire like the best devotional tales.

Of course, all of this is too neat. Since the bulk of evidence originates in reports by European clergymen, caution must be exercised. Eliot's tracts were progress reports, sent to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to encourage continued funding for his missions. Similarly, the letters and diaries of Moravian missionaries would eventually make their way into official church histories like George Henry Loskiel's as inspiration to the Brethren in Herrnhut. While useful, the often formulaic language of these witnesses' accounts should not be allowed to mislead. While literate Indians did exist in both societies, little written by Indian hands has survived the centuries, and the words of European intermediaries must suffice. In the excerpts that begin this essay, Christian Indians are described as silent, patient souls, "humbly and piously" enduring their trials. These Puritan and Moravian internees, imprisoned in terrible conditions for one-and-a-half and two years, respectively, probably experienced many moments bereft of humility and piety. Nevertheless, they did endure their trials, and those trials were turning points, however much the language of interested spectators idealized the situations. Trusting their European protectors rather than choosing flight or resistance make the actions of these Indian minorities fascinating and inspirational, even taking the dramatic rhetoric into account.



It is the absence of flight, in fact, that makes the strongest argument in favor of bonafide Indian internalization of Christian teachings and attitudes. In both cases, Indians knew quite well the dangers of living in the praying towns long before emergencies arose. Praying Indians lived in Natick for twenty-six years before the onset of King Philip's War, and endured enough ethnocentric intolerance to see which way the tide was turning. Moravian Indians lived in danger for almost their entire time in their praying towns. Gnadenhütten on the Mahoney suffered destruction only six years after its inception, and Moravian Indians lived in constant fear of a reprisal thereafter. Economic benefits and European trade goods were probably not enough to make up for the danger, for Indians throughout the region had access to such goods and found ways of appropriating them with or without missionary aid. Neither does the intercession of charismatic benefactors explain the Indians' willingness to put themselves in the path of danger. Massachusetts Indians had formed their own churches and installed Indian ministers, and traditional sachems like Waban continued to lead their lay communities throughout wartime. Similarly, Moravian Indians kept the counsel of their own traditional elders like Jacob as much as they followed the advice of David Zeisberger. While no one can deny the influence and importance of these white men among their Indian followers, the paternalistic images of men like Eliot and Zeisberger might represent Eurocentric missionary imagery as much as they do European-Indian reality. It is also unlikely in either case that Indians chose to live with Europeans as a method of obtaining intervention with provincial authorities because it was the Indians' choice to live as Europeans that made that intercession necessary in the first place. Non-Christian Pokanokets and Delawares did not grovel and beg before European civil authorities; rather, they negotiated and fought with

them as one would expect of autonomous powers. It seems more likely that, even while they maintained a significant degree of their traditional identities, both Puritan and Moravian praying Indians thought of themselves as European enough to place their faith in white civil and religious benefactors and internalized enough Christianity to display Christian attitudes in the face of adversity. Yet, the diverse nature of conversion and of the Christian doctrines in question might suggest different courses of events for the two groups of praying Indians. Within the constraints of Protestantism, German Pietism was nearly the opposite of Puritan Calvinism. Why did the praying Indians react to their moments of truth in such similar fashions?

The most striking difference in these two tales is the nature of the religions taken on by the natives in relation to their traditional lifeways and beliefs, especially initiation rites. Puritanism, with its emphasis on predestination and saving grace, could only have seemed alien to the beleaguered Massachusetts Bay natives of the 1640s. John Eliot, Thomas Mayhew, and other Puritan missionaries reduced this difference by emphasizing the importance of prayer, which at least appealed to the Indians' desire to communicate with the spirit world. But one can only imagine the difficulty with which the residents of the seven original Massachusetts praying towns learned their catechisms and honed their self-abasing conversion statements, let alone the pressure of facing the assembled Roxbury congregation and confessing their degradation as miserable, unworthy sinners. These Indians, confronting a mysterious religious process, were changed by their conversions. Like their Puritan teachers, they immersed themselves in humility and self-doubt, eschewed pride, and steeled themselves for lives as servants of their Lord with the knowledge that they, among all people on Earth, had been elected to spend eternity at God's side. They knew

that God authored all tragedy to test the faithful, and when adversity came the Puritan praying Indians faced it with appropriate humility.

For the Moravian Indians, the situation could not have been more different. The antiformalist and emotional rituals of the renewed Moravian church resonated with their own ancient traditions of feast and song, blood and sacrifice. In strange black-coated, trombone-playing, German-speaking missionaries, a few Lenapes and Mahicans found kindred spirits who understood that blood carried the vitality of life. The land may have abandoned them, but the Lenapes saw no reason to undertake migrations to unfamiliar lands or to join nativist revival movements. Moravian missionaries represented a chance to renew the Indians' harmony with the environment and the universe, though not through traditional means; the Indians' former culture could never be regained in the wake of the European cultural onslaught. Most important, to join this brotherhood Indians had only to profess (and believe in) their love for its founder, whose bloody, sacrificial image they imagined swaying before their eyes every day of their lives. When adversity came, the Moravian Indians called upon this image and saw themselves joyously reflected in Christ's gory passion.

Both Puritan and Moravian praying Indians sought cultural renewal. In planned mission towns they expected to maintain a quality of life rather than actual traditions, though out of an innate conservatism and pragmatism they maintained as many of their traditional lifeways as they could. They looked for the basics of their familiar existence: harmony with the environment, sufficiency in food, water and shelter, and comfort with the world of spirits. In the midst of a more pressing demographic emergency and without a largely unpopulated Ohio Valley available for migration, New England's Indians accepted the teachings and trappings of Puritan religion

sooner and in greater numbers than they might have under more favorable circumstances. Lenapes in the next century had other options and by and large they took them. The very small minority who opted for lives in the Moravian praying towns did so by preference, following continuities between their own spiritual traditions and those of their German brethren.

In the end, Indians in both societies chose dependence as a way of life, a disdainful term to modern individualistic sensibilities, but in perfect keeping with their newly-found Christian notions of subservience and humility. Each in their own ways, Puritan and Moravian praying Indians followed the leads of their religious advisors and bore all the indignities and outrages that an intolerant cultural invasion could hurl at them. The converts entered their flocks with openness and trust, becoming children of the Lamb and lambs themselves, cared for by Puritan and Moravian shepherds, and fleeced and slaughtered by others.

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